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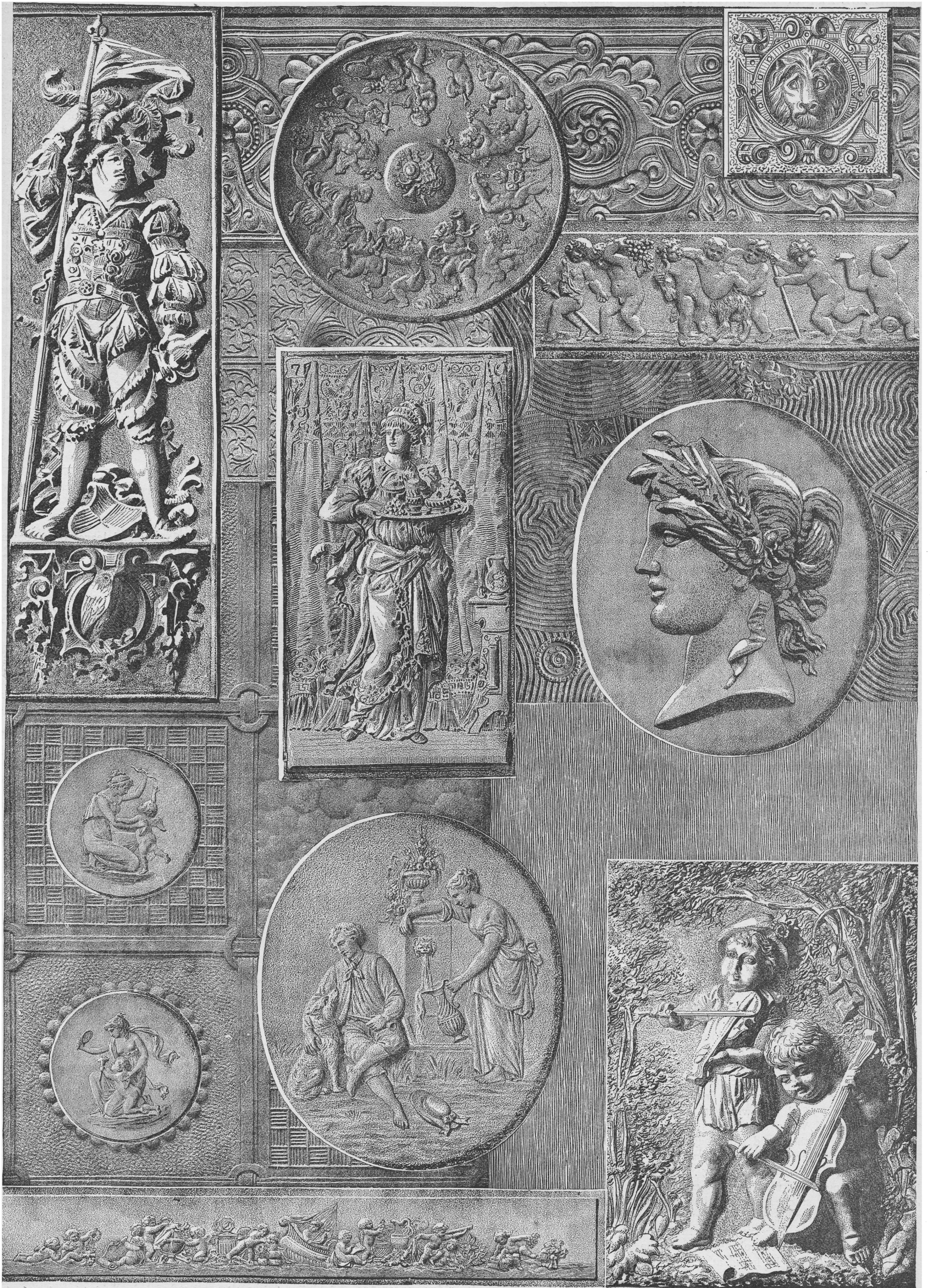
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ART OBJECTS IN LINCRUSTA-WALTON.

EXAMPLES OF PANELS, PLAQUES, FRIEZES, AND BORDERS IN LOW RELIEF, DISPLAYED ON A BACKGROUND OF LINCRUSTA WALL COVERING.

(FOR DIRECTIONS FOR TREATMENT SEE OPPOSITE PAGE.)

THE ART OF EMBROIDERY.

II.

WE suppose that the learner who has thoroughly understood stem-stitch and worked it out from our instructions, is now perfect in that which is practically the ground-work of all embroidery; that she can work a perfectly even line, with the stitches all about the same length, and strictly following each other, or can give a slightly serrated edge to a leaf by taking the stitches at an angle; that she can work

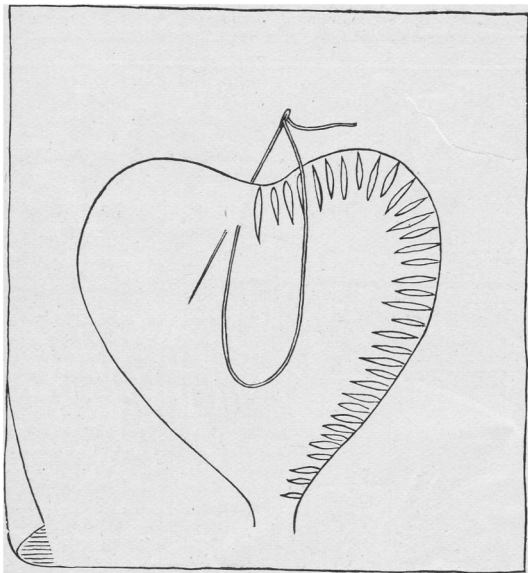


FIG. 4. LONG AND SHORT STITCH.

around curves without any pulling of the materials she is embroidering on, or any looseness of the crewel or silk. This perfection can only be had by careful practice: the stitch is always the same, as described last month, but experience alone can show the mode of working evenly, and until that is acquired it is useless to go on to anything more elaborate.

The next, which is known as long and short stitch, is much more difficult, especially in hand embroidery, which alone is under consideration at present. It is often used for a bold kind of outline for such flowers as the wild rose or for conventional designs in flower form. It is most effective when worked with a thick strand of crewel or silk, and is especially charming when worked on plush or on long-pile velvet; the plush is laid by the stitches at the edge, and rises in the centre of the petal in such a way as to give the deeper shades, thus producing a very fine effect with comparatively little work.

This stitch consists in taking alternately a long and

a short stitch in a direction radiating from the centre or stalk end of the petal, and in such a manner as to make a close, even line round the outline, and a broken edge toward the centre, as shown in Fig. 4. To effect this it is necessary to be very careful that the points at which the needle enters the material at the edge of the petal shall be very even and exactly on the line. The worker must start from the narrow part of the petal, being very careful to keep the direction of the stitches right from the first, or she will find she will get them wrong. When she reaches the centre of the broad part, they must be as even as possible, always taking care that the long stitches shall

be the same length, and the same distance from each other. The short stitches between them will allow for the curve of the outline, and the difficulty is always in getting the stitches to correspond with this curve, and in preserving a perfect regularity and smoothness.

A little difficulty will be found at first in working down the left side of the petal, but only practice can remove this. And the learner should make a careful study of the stitch on a piece of linen, perfecting herself first in working up the petal, and when that has

become easy to her, attempting the other side, until she can get perfect radiation of the stitches from the centre toward both edges.

Having mastered stem-stitch and long and short edging stitch, she may now go on to practise feather-stitch (Fig. 5.) which is simply a combination of these two and is embroidery stitch proper.

The origin of the name—feather-stitch—the “opus plumarium” of the old inventories Dr. Rock considers to have been its supposed resemblance to the plumage of a bird, the stitches fitting into one another and overlapping so as to present no hard lines or ugly edges. It has been sometimes called “shading stitch” but the multiplicity of names only causes confusion. In working feather-stitch in such a petal as that of a wild rose it is necessary to work an edge with long and short stitches leaving a broken line toward the centre of the petal. You then proceed to fill up the petal with a kind of irregular stem-stitch, inasmuch as the stitches are longer on the surface than on the under side of the material. They must be worked in between the uneven lengths of the edging stitches, always keeping them so as to converge toward the stalk end of the petal, which must be gradually filled up in this way. When finished, the rows of stitches should be so merged into each other that they cannot be distinguished, and they should present a perfectly smooth, even surface, the colors melting into one another. Where different shades are used, only practice can give the worker the proper facility for filling up a petal evenly, ascertaining the best length of stitch to take and the best position for bringing out the needle. Some workers find it useful to mark with pencil on the material the direction the stitches ought to take; but this is only possible when using linen or some light-colored material, unless tailor's chalk is used, which may be done if only very light touches are given.

It has already been pointed out that the work should be started by running the thread in along the part afterward to be covered by embroidery. In finishing, the needle should be passed backward and forward two or three times and the thread cut off *on the front of the work*. Skilful embroiderers will waste no material, but they differ much in their mode of working feather-stitch, some preferring to carry back the thread on the surface toward the centre of the petal, others making the stitches almost the same length on both sides of the material; these details must, however, be left to the fancy and intelligence of the worker, who will soon learn the method in which she can produce the best effect with the least material.

The back of the work should in all cases, however, be perfectly neat, and have no knots or loose ends about it, and of course the less crewel there is at the back, the better it will be, provided that the appearance of the work is good on the surface.

The same directions hold good for working leaves with serrated edges, such as hawthorn or Virginia creeper, only that in these cases the edging stitches must follow the broken outline of the leaf, instead of forming an even line, and some extra care will be needed in filling up so as not to make an ugly ridge, especially if the leaf is a narrow one or divided.

In working a flower such as the wild rose the embroiderer will of course decide first whether the lightest shade is to be at the edge or centre of the petal; we will suppose it to be at the edge. She will work the edge entirely in the light shade, and then taking a needleful of the next will carefully work it round the petal, carrying the stitches as far as she can toward the edge, and leaving a very broken appearance toward the centre. The next shade will be worked in in the same manner, taking great care not to give the work the appearance of being worked in rows, but to work it up as much as possible and blend each shade into the last. In order to do this well, the stitches must be of very different lengths; but they must never be long enough to become loose, and if too short, they will pucker the work and make it look uneven.

As has been already remarked, it is a mistake to use too long a needleful. It is apt to pull the work, and is very wasteful, as it always becomes frayed toward the end and has to be finished off, and a new one taken; half the length of the skein is quite sufficient. It should not be manufactured with a twist as it always gives the work a ridgy appearance.

The silk should never be allowed to get into a tangle, and there is no need that it should if proper

care is taken with it; but if it should become a little roughened in dividing it, pure silk can always be smoothed again through the fingers.

In using crewel and silk together, or crewel “brightened with silk,” as it is called, the petal or other portion of the design should be completely worked with crewel first in feather-stitch, but it should be lightly done, that is to say, not closely filled in. The silk may then be used to fill or work it up; but it will never look well if completely finished in crewel first, and the silk worked upon the crewel.

Let us suppose now that the embroiderer is under-

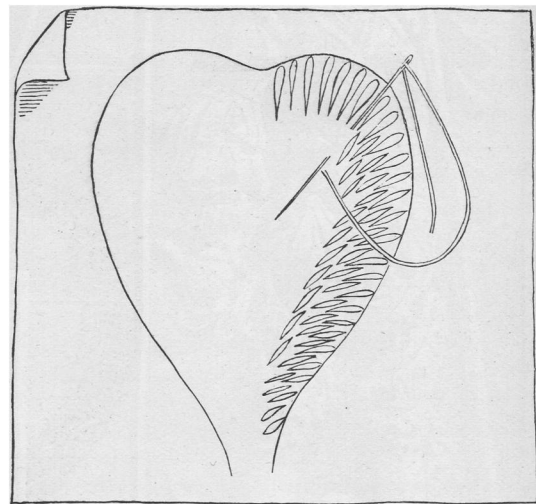


FIG. 5. FEATHER-STITCH.

taking a design of flowers and leaves or a conventional design of scrolls and flowers. The stalks of the flowers will all be done in solid stem-stitch, that is to say, with rows of stem-stitch. Some workers are very particular to start all the rows from the same end, and there is no doubt that it wonderfully affects the evenness of the work to do so. It must be left to the taste of the worker whether this evenness is desired. Some of the finest effects are produced in embroidery as in painting by a certain roughness and irregularity.

Some small flowers such as jessamine are worked without the long and short edging stitch in quite irregular-stem or feather-stitch without the edge, as in Fig. 6. Care must then be taken to make an even edge, and not to get a ridge or bunch in the centre. The stitches must be taken from the stalk end toward the edge and not worked round in rows of stem-stitch as in an ordinary leaf.

Very small petals are occasionally worked in satin-stitch (Fig. 7.) but it is not, as a rule, an artistic way of working, and should be avoided as much as possible, except in cases where it is used for enrichments on other embroidery or in conventional designs for

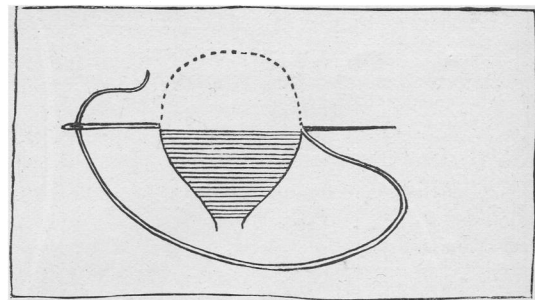


FIG. 7. SATIN-STITCH.

raised spots. It is the stitch known in France as “plumetis,” and is chiefly used in white embroidery on linen or cambric. The needle is passed at the back of the petal each time it is put into the material, and is brought out as close as possible to the last stitch. By this means exactly the same amount of crewel is on the back as on the front of the design. It requires to be very evenly done and the work kept quite smooth with the back of the thumb nail as it goes on. It is supposed to have the appearance of satin when finished, and when properly done it certainly has—hence its name.

L. HIGGIN.

(To be continued.)